

## **HYGIENE MATS**

This application is a continuation-in-part of Serial No. 09/195,450, filed on November 18, 1998.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates to hygiene mats on which users, e.g. visitors, can disinfect the soles of their shoes or boots, before they enter into a barn or the like.

At many farms it is common practice to try to exclude contamination through shoes and/or boots by placing open containers with disinfection fluids at the entrances. Visitors can disinfect their shoes and boots by 'dipping' their feet into the container filled with disinfection liquid. Many of these containers are cut out plastic jerrycans which contain variable quantities of liquid that pollute quickly and in which visitors are almost unable to disinfect their shoes or boots without running the risk of getting wet feet.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

The invention relates to a combination of a liquid retaining mat, which is substantially fully surrounded by a wear resistant, permeable fabric material, fitted in a waterproof sleeve to prevent leaking of the liquid into the environment.

In particular, the hygiene mats according to the present invention comprise an absorbing mat which is covered on substantially all sides by a protective, woven, permeable polypropylene material and supplied with a waterproof sleeve which is open on the top side in order to contain disinfecting liquid(s).

The mats can be manufactured in different sizes for different

applications to replace the known open 'footbaths', pieces of carpet or foamrubber.

Based on the above principle, the present invention aims to provide for more than one application.

The invention aims to be a quality medium to disinfect the shoes or boots of visitors to the premises, or alternatively the equipment, like the wheels of farm transport means, carts, forklifttrucks and furthermore the wheels of cars and lorries. In this connection, the invention aims to provide a reservoir for disinfecting liquid, without hard, upstanding edges, where an easy application and passage is combined with a longer contact between the object to disinfect and the disinfecting liquid. In the case of persons using the hygiene mats, said longer contact is caused by the fact that a user can stand on the mat with both feet, without liquid running over and into his shoes. In case the mats are being used by transport means, it is prevented that said means have to pass over elevations or edges in or on the floor.

The invention also aims to be an alternative to the partial care of the feet or claws of farm animals like cattle and sheep. In this case the mat is provided with a caring or disinfecting, or another purpose serving, product. The animals are made to walk over the mat and consequently come into contact with the product contained in the mat.

The latter purpose of the invention is advantageous as animals have a natural dislike for open surfaces of water and tend to jump over such surfaces or containers providing such surfaces. Furthermore they have the reflex to manure in the reservoir or water surface when they are forced to pass it.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The above and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

fig. 1 shows schematically a top view of the hygiene mat according to the present invention in a first embodiment; and  
fig. 2 - fig. 7 show hygiene mats according to further embodiments.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As mentioned in the above, the mats according to the invention may be used for different applications, namely as:

1. disinfecting mat for persons;
2. disinfecting mat for equipment; and
3. claw mat for animals.

Depending on the application, the measurements of the mats will vary. The construction principle of the mat according to the invention is as follows. The mat 1 comprises a liquid retaining core, in particular a polyether core, indicated by reference numeral 2, which is surrounded by a permeable material layer 3 that prevents pollution and wear of the core and therefore increases the life thereof. Preferably, the permeable material layer 3 is made of polypropylene.

The polyether core, or polyether foam, 2 advantageously comprises polyether SG 20 to SG 40, and preferably has a thickness of 20 mm - 80 mm. The permeable protection of polypropylene preferably has a density of 265 g/m<sup>2</sup> and comprises quality 24119 from Nicolon TenCate®.

In order to improve the strength of the construction, the mat is preferably stitched at about 10-15 cm from the edges thereof. Said stitches are indicated with reference numeral 4.

The core 2, surrounded with the material layer 3, is provided with a cover 5 which is meant to function as a container restraint for a liquid to be contained in the core.

Preferably, the cover 5 comprises a double coated polyester material. Preferably, the density of the polyester material is 650 g/m<sup>2</sup>.

As shown in the drawings, the cover 5 covers the bottom and the sides of the core, and covers only partially the top thereof. A person using the mat will step on said mat in the non-covered area and will come into contact with the liquid retained in the core thereof. As mentioned in the above, the liquid may be a disinfecting liquid or any other liquid, such as a caring liquid.

Because of the close surrounding of the cover 5 on the core 2 with the material layer 3, the disinfecting liquid is pushed upwards whenever the mat is being stepped on. The location where a person puts his feet down on the mat will be compressed and liquid will flow immediately to this lowest point and will surround the shoes of boots of said person. In the case of an animals, the claws of said animal will be surrounded by the liquid and in the case of transport equipment, the wheels thereof will be surrounded.

The measurements of the mats according to fig. 1-7 vary and are as follows:

- fig. 1 1800 x 900 x 40 mm (l x w x h)
- fig. 2 900 x 900 x 40 mm (l x w x h)
- fig. 3 1800 x 500 x 40 mm (l x w x h)
- fig. 4 1800 x 900 x 80 mm (l x w x h)
- fig. 5 900 x 600 x 40 mm (l x w x h)
- fig. 6 1800 x 900 x 80 mm (l x w x h)
- fig. 7 300 x 300 x 32 mm (l x w x h)

Further embodiments of the present invention are also possible. The sleeve may further include a seal in the edge of the sleeve along one or more sides, preferably the shorter sides. The seal may be in the form of a piece of foam rubber, optionally recycled foam rubber. The seal causes a more narrow connection between the sleeve and the core which may help to prevent animals from stumbling when they step forward to leave the mat at the front side or when they step backward to leave the mat at the back side again.

The sleeve may also be provided with eyes or a suspension frame, such as a tape. This allows the mat to be suspended, which simplifies storage, drying, and transport.

The core may further include a strip of stiff material, such as polyvinylchloride (PVC). The strip may be placed inside the core along one or more sides, preferably one or both of the long sides, to increase stiffness of the core. This prevents the core from “jumping” out of the sleeve, which might otherwise occur under strenuous use.

The mat may also include a reservoir sealed at a bottom of the sleeve to store liquid. The reservoir may be filled with foam. Liquid will be sucked into the reservoir when the core is empty, optionally through use of a piston mechanism,. When the core is depressed, liquid will be sprayed from the reservoir via a pipe made from a soft material onto the object being cleaned, such as the claw of an animal.

In another embodiment, a soft bin is formed by sealing within the total edge of the sleeve a filling of 4 – 8 x 6cm over which a stiff fabric, such as polypropylene, preferably a so called “trampoline” fabric, has been stretched by stitching or sealing it at one side and using an attachment mechanism, such as hook and loop tape, at the other side. This embodiment provides the advantages of greater ease in cleaning and transport as there is no foam rubber, and the likelihood of stumbling is minimized. Of course, such a soft bin may also be used without the stiff cover fabric as a bin to drive or walk through, or in combination with the core described above.